

# PUERTO RICO'S COLONIAL DILEMMA

• Mr. SIMON. Mr. President, representing Puerto Rico in the House of Representatives is CARLOS ROMERO-BARCELÓ, the former Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

I have worked with him through the years and have come to have great respect for him.

One of his passions is that Puerto Rican citizens not be second-class citizens but have all the rights that the rest of us, as Americans, have.

I share that passion with him.

The blatant inconsistency of the way we treat people in Puerto Rico should be on the consciences of those of us who serve in the House and the Senate.

Recently, Representative ROMERO-BARCELÓ sent a "Dear Colleague" to the Members of the House and enclosed an item of his that was published in the Washington Times about Puerto Rico.

I ask to insert that at the end of these remarks and urge my colleagues in the Senate and the House to listen to his powerful message.

The letter follows:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Washington, DC, January 24, 1995.

Re Puerto Rico's colonial dilemma.

DEAR COLLEAGUE: On December 15, 1994, I wrote a column—a copy is provided on the reverse side—published in the Washington Times in which I discussed Puerto Rico's colonial dilemma and the unequal treatment of U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico.

For the past 97 years, Puerto Rico has been and still is a territory, or a colony, of the United States. The Island is home to 3.7 million American citizens who are disenfranchised and deprived of participating in the democratic process of the Nation. This disenfranchisement has been justified by a policy, created and maintained by Congress, which frees residents of Puerto Rico from paying Federal personal and corporate income taxes. Puerto Rico's residents do, however, pay most all other Federal taxes and user fees. In addition, this exemption from Federal income taxes has justified the exclusion of the island's residents in critical Federal programs such as Supplement Security Income [SSI].

Moreover, through section 936 of the Internal Revenue Code, the Federal Government has exempted subsidiaries of multi-national corporations in Puerto Rico from Federal corporate taxes. Section 936 has resulted in a socio-economic policy for Puerto Rico that is exactly opposite of the socio-economic policy of the rest of the Nation. While wealthy corporations in Puerto Rico are given billions of dollars in annual tax credits, the poor, the disabled, the elderly, and children at risk are denied the same safety net and economic opportunities that their fellow citizens receive in the 50 States and the District of Columbia.

Like the District, Puerto Rico has no voting representation in Congress, yet its residents are also denied the right to vote in the Presidential elections. This is significant because the President is our top elected official and the one who makes daily policy decisions that affect all citizens, including those in Puerto Rico.

We preach the virtues of democracy throughout the world. Nevertheless, the United States still maintains the largest colony in the world—Puerto Rico—home to 3.7

million disenfranchised American citizens that are excluded from the democratic process of their Nation.

American citizens in Puerto Rico should not be denied full participation in our great democratic experience. Residents of the island should share in equality with their fellow citizens in the 50 States, not only in the rights and benefits protected by the U.S. Constitution but in the responsibilities and duties as well.

I urge you to read my column which sheds more light on Puerto Rico's colonial dilemma and the unequal and unfair treatment which our people receive as a result of the existing colonial relationship.

Sincerely,

CARLOS ROMERO-BARCELÓ.

[From the Washington Times, Dec. 15, 1994]  
THE CASE FOR PUERTO RICO'S VOTING RIGHTS

(By Carlos Romero-Barceló)

Regarding your Dec. 6 editorial "Taxation, representation and the District": As Puerto Rico's only elected representative to Congress, I am, keenly aware of the limitations faced by the five delegates in the House of Representatives.

Since the early 1970s we have been able to vote in the House committees on which we serve. This important authority was secured by the Puerto Rican delegate of the time, Jorge Luis Cordova-Diaz. In 1993, Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton did indeed actively seek and obtain the right to vote in the Committee of the Whole for herself and the other four delegates. Although this was merely symbolic, we nevertheless welcomed the opportunity for added participation in House proceedings.

With respect to the distinction you make between the District's representative and the other delegates on the basis of federal taxation in our respective districts, I differ with your analysis, at least in the case of Puerto Rico.

First, Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory since 1898, is home to 3.7 million American citizens, who are disenfranchised and deprived of participating in the democratic process of their nation. Federal personal income taxes are not levied on residents of the island, not because we don't want to pay them, but because Congress has maintained this policy since income taxes were first imputed in order to justify our disenfranchisement. Nevertheless, most other federal taxes and user fees are indeed applicable in Puerto Rico (e.g., Social Security taxes, unemployment taxes, Medicare taxes, customs duties, certain excise taxes and even income taxes on income derived outside of Puerto Rico). In fact, the U.S. Treasury collected from Puerto Rico \$2.5 billion during 1993 (source Advanced Draft, IRS Commissioner's Report, 1993).

The congressional policy of not extending federal income taxes to the island has also been used as an excuse for not granting equal treatment in federal programs to U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico. For example, the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program is not applicable to otherwise eligible U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico. Other critical programs such as Chapter I education funds, Medicaid, Aid to Families with Dependent Children and the Nutritional Assistance program are severely capped. Medicaid is capped at approximately 10 percent of what we would get if we were treated on an equal basis.

Moreover, Congress and successive administrations have put in effect a tax and economic policy that has a "reverse Robin Hood effect." The federal government, for instance, has opted to exempt subsidiaries of U.S. corporations in Puerto Rico from federal corporate taxes through Section 936 of

the Internal Revenue Code. The 936 tax credit has cost U.S. taxpayers \$50 billion in the past two decades. According to the latest estimates from the Joint Committee on Taxation, Section 936 will cost the federal government \$19.7 billion in the next five years. Congress has maintained, through Section 936, a tax policy that results in a socio-economic policy for Puerto Rico that is exactly the opposite of the socioeconomic policy for the nation. While wealthy multinational corporations are given billions of dollars in annual tax credits (corporate welfare), hundreds of thousands of poor families the disabled, the elderly, and children are denied the same safety net and financial and economic support that their fellow citizens receive in the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The public and the national media have the false impression that citizens in Puerto Rico do not pay any income taxes. Nothing could be further from the truth. People in Puerto Rico have indeed a very high local tax burden. Personal income taxes in Puerto Rico are generally higher than anywhere else in the United States, including jurisdictions where people pay local/state and federal income taxes.

Thus, it is the middle class, the working poor, the indigent, the elderly and the children who suffer the detrimental consequences of a federal taxation policy that makes no sense in Puerto Rico, we do not set the rules; Congress does I must reiterate that, just as in the case of the District, Congress has absolute power over the affairs of Puerto Rico. And just like the District, we have our version of "home rule," inappropriately referred to as "commonwealth." Make no mistake about it, Puerto Rico was and continues to be, de facto and de jure, a territory or colony of the United States.

Second, although residents of the District, like their counterparts in Puerto Rico, have no voting representation in Congress, at least they are able to vote in presidential elections. This is significant because the president is our top elected official and the one who makes the daily policy decisions that affect all citizens, including the ones in Puerto Rico. All U.S. citizens, including those abroad, are able to vote for the president, except those who make Puerto Rico and the other territories their home. People in Puerto Rico have no input in the election of the nation's commander in chief, notwithstanding the fact that they are subject to all federal laws and policies.

Thousands of U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico have paid the ultimate price and have died defending our shared democratic values. In our armed forces, more Puerto Ricans have died in armed conflicts during this century than citizens of any other state (on a per capita basis).

As mayor and governor, I have denounced federal tax policy toward Puerto Rico that benefits most those who are wealthy and penalizes the poor, the elderly, the children and the working class. I urge federal policymakers to take steps to extend full and equal economic benefits and responsibilities to Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans and all U.S. taxpayers will benefit from uniform and sensible application of our fiscal laws and our socioeconomic policies.

Finally, I have always maintained that we want to share in equality with our fellow citizens in the 50 states, not only in the rights and benefits but in the responsibilities and duties as well. At least in the District of Columbia citizens are partially enfranchised with political power. Not so the 3.7 million U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico. Political power is the ultimate form of liberation.

It is ironic indeed that the virtues of democracy are being highlighted during the

Summit of the Americans while our nation denies 3.7 million citizens the right to participate in the democratic process. During the 1990s, the U.N. decade of decolonization, the United States must face the implications and repercussions of maintaining a colonial relationship with its territories.●

#### REMARKS OF OSBORN ELLIOTT

● Mr. MOYNIHAN. Mr. President, on January 12 the chairman of the Citizens Committee for New York City, Osborn Elliott, gave a thought-provoking speech on the role of journalism in public life. Mr. Elliott is the former dean of the Columbia University School of Journalism, and his remarks, which were made at the Key West Literary Seminar, deserve the attention of the Senate. Accordingly, I ask that the speech be included in the RECORD.

##### TIME FOR THE PRESS TO GET INVOLVED

(John Hersey Memorial Lecture by Osborn Elliott)

I'd like to tell you this evening about a love affair that is on the rocks.

The romance began a long time ago. It started as a schoolboy's infatuation, went roiling lustily through the pubescent years, and ultimately flowered into a deep and sustaining passion. There were ups and downs along the way, just as there are in any relationship. But the bonds grew stronger as the decades passed.

Now the affair is on the rocks, and I'm going to tell you why.

My romance with journalism began sixty years ago, when I was a little boy. On my way home from school one day, I stopped in at Mr. Rappaport's stationery store at 62nd Street and Third Avenue, to buy a Christmas card. In the back of his shop Mr. Rappaport kept an ancient press surrounded by wooden cases of type. He invited me to watch as he plucked letters from a font, handset his type, then put the great, hissing, clanking press into motion. Somehow, amid the aromatic chaos of printer's ink and noise, pristine sheets of stationery came flying out of that old machine.

To be young at Mr. Rappaport's was very heaven. It was the beginning of the affair.

Before you could say Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, I had acquired a toy typewriter, and was banging out my own newspaper, *The Weekly Eagle*, shamelessly plagiarizing Lindbergh kidnapping stories from the *New York Daily News*. I made three carbon copies of my paper so that circulation (at a nickel a copy) could extend beyond my parents to my brother and the woman who took care of me when my mother and father were at work. The weekly *Eagle* lasted three weeks, and its circulation never exceeded a total of four (unaudited).

After that came the thrill of working on my school magazine, and savoring that magical moment when copies would arrive from the printer, tightly wrapped in brown paper bundles. I would rip open the neat packages and wonder at how my hencratches had been miraculously converted into beautiful columns of type, marching down the page.

Later, in the Navy, it fell my lot to edit my ship's paper and to deliver the nightly news over the public-address system. And it was while I was still in the Navy, in the winter of 1945, that I had my first brush with big-time journalism. I was home on leave from Admiral Halsey's fleet in the Pacific and my parents had invited Charles Merz, editorial page editor of *The New York Times*, to dinner one night. Before we went in to eat, Charlie Merz picked up the phone and called the *Times*.

"Anything new from Halsey?" he inquired as I listened, goggle-eyed. Later that evening, Merz took us on a tour of the *Times*, through the newsroom and down to the typesetting room where the gangly linotype machines hissed and clanked, much like Mr. Rappaport's press. Then to the composing room, where pages were laid out and the type was locked up. And finally, to the pressroom, where everyone seemed to be nervously eyeing a large clock on the wall. As the sweep secondhand made its way around the face of the clock, Charlie Merz stepped up to the press. At 11 p.m. on the dot he raised his arm and he flicked an impressive red switch labeled START.

Slowly, the huge press began to turn, then faster and faster and soon the place was roaring rhythmically as bundles of the next day's *Times* came thumping onto the loading dock below.

From that moment on, I was hooked—and for the better part of half a century my romance with journalism paid huge rewards. Struggling to learn the basics as a young business reporter, I came to realize that even the most esoteric topic can be of interest once you get to know something about it—even the workings of the non-ferrous metals market, my very first beat for the *New York Journal of Commerce*.

Journalism gave me the most amazing access to people and events. I had interviews with half a dozen presidents, audiences with two Popes and the emperor of Japan. I traveled through Africa, Europe, Asia and Russia—and spent the most interesting week in my life living, and learning, in the black ghettos of America.

I was nattered at by Nasser, charmed by Giscard, irritated by Indira, jollied up by JFK, lambasted by LBJ and nit-picked by Nixon. I fell in love (unrequited) with the likes of Sills, Bacall and Ullman. I called Leonard "Lenny," Lauren "Betty," Henry "Henry" and Teddy "Ted."

Who wouldn't be seduced by all that? My romance flourished.

But for all the fun and games, there was seriousness of purpose that underlay most of the journalism that was practiced in those years—a belief that what we journalists did was important, that journalism could play a constructive role in exposing, confronting and thus helping to solve the great problems of the day.

Sometimes our work was agonizing, as when we wrestled week in and week out with the contradictions of Vietnam, trying to reconcile the conflicting reports we were getting from Washington and from the field. Sometimes our work was exhilarating, as when we produced a special issue of *Newsweek* on Black America, complete with recommendations on how the nation might begin to ease its racial dilemma. And sometimes our work was ineffably sad, as when we deployed our forces to cover the assassination of first one Kennedy and then another, and the killing of Martin Luther King.

I tell you all this not because my experience was unique, but because it was so typical. As great issues unfolded, we journalists did our best to understand and explain them to our readers, listeners and viewers. We did not much question the motives of public figures—except when there was a clear attempt to mislead, as in the Watergate disaster. We did not dwell obsessively on process, preferring instead to deal in substance. We did not poke through the garbage of people in the public eye.

I think we played a central role, and a positive one, in helping a democratic system thrash its way through trauma after trauma and toward something approaching consensus.

Thus did my romance with journalism ripen and mature.

It's hard to pinpoint exactly when the relationship began to crumble, but crumble it did. It's even harder to explain why. So many factors were at work.

For one thing, I changed careers and moved into public service as a deputy mayor of New York City, and for the first time I had a view of journalism from the other side of the editor's desk. While I personally was treated well by the press, I found my old trade to be quixotic, unfocused, inaccurate and too often the prisoner of preconceptions. The assumption, for example, that anyone working for city government was, ipso facto, an incompetent drone—while I was learning that great numbers of city workers were actually dedicated and hard-working folk.

I also became aware of a failure of will within my old trade.

Strangely enough, no sooner had the power of journalism reached its zenith than editors began to back off from the fray. Having helped to topple one president—Nixon—and having derided another—Ford—and having snickered at a third—Carter—as he succumbed to a killer rabbit and other forces of evil, journalists found themselves uncomfortably close to the center of things and more and more being blamed when the business of the Nation seemed to be going wrong. So when yet another president—Reagan—took office with popularity ratings in the high seventies and eighties, some kind of unspoken decision was made to lay off.

I think journalism has a lot to account for as a result of this failure of will. By allowing a kind of social Darwinism—a.k.a. Reaganism—to go mostly unchallenged on the one hand, and by failing on the other hand to adequately expose the inane contradictions of supply-side theories, a.k.a. Reaganomics, I believe journalism deserves some of the blame for ills that now afflict us. I think journalism is also in part responsible for a default of the national spirit that recently has allowed a meanness to spread through the land.

What caused journalism to abdicate its responsibility in the eighties? Was it a function of exhaustion? Of fear? Of simple distraction? Probably a measure of each.

After the turmoil of the Sixties, the strains of Vietnam, the shock of assassinations, the tensions of the Cold War and the treacheries of Watergate, who wouldn't be tired?

And as readership began to shrink, and advertising dollars disappeared, who wouldn't be afraid to challenge the most popular President in memory?

Certainly there were distractions aplenty, as well. A kind of Gresham's law—or was it Murdoch's?—saw bad journalism chasing out the good in the scramble for ratings and readership. On the morning news, a new breed of elbow-in-the-ribs performers took over the airwaves. In the afternoon and evening, the Rush Limbaughs and Bob Grants and other big mouths of the far right took over talk radio.

Meanwhile, in America's videocracy the talk shows stooped to conquer the ratings as Maury and Montel and Sally Jessie and Phil and Geraldo engaged in mortal combat over who could produce the most shock or schlock. Last Sunday night, "CNN Presents" devoted an hour to deploring what is called "The Media Circus" and its obsession with the O.J. Simpson trial in particular. At the end of the hour, Judy Woodruff announced the topic for next Sunday's "CNN Presents." You guessed it, O.J. Simpson.

Meanwhile, other Sabbath fare is offered weekly by Morton and Sam and Eleanor and